BLUE BEARD.

Embellished with neat Engravings on Wood.

COOPERSTOWN:
Printed and published by H. & E. Phinney.

1828

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LOS ANGELES

POPULAR STORY

OF

BLUE BEARD.

FRONTISPIECE.

While Fatima is kneeling to Blue Beard, and supplicating for mercy, he seizes her by the hair, and raises his scymetar to cut off her head.

THE

POPULAR STORY

OF

BLUE BEARD.

Embellished with neat Engravings.

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The Alphabet.

A B C D E F G H I J K
L M N O P Q R S T
U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o
p q r s t u v w x y z

A B C D E F G H I J K
L M N O P Q R S T
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THE

POPULAR STORY

OF

BLUE BEARD.

A LONG time ago, and at a considerable distance from any town, there lived a gentleman, who was not only in possession of great riches, but of the largest estates in that part of the country. Although he had some very elegant neat mansions on his estates, he generally resided in a magnificent castle, beautifully situated on a rising ground, surrounded with groves of the finest evergreens, and other choice trees and shrubs.

The inside of this fine castle was even more beautiful than the outside; for the rooms were all hung with the richest

damask, curiously ornamented; the chairs and sofas were covered with the finest velvet, fringed with gold; and his table-dishes and plates were either of silver or gold, finished in the most elegant style. His carriages and horses might have served a king, and perhaps were finer than any monarch's of the present day. The gentleman's appearance, however, did not altogether correspond to his wealth; for, to a fierce disagreeable countenance, was added an ugly blue beard, which made him an object of fear and disgust in the neighbourhood, where he usually went by the name of Blue Beard.

There resided, at some considerable distance from Blue Beard's castle, an old lady and her two daughters, who were people of some rank, but by no means wealthy. The two young ladies were very pretty, and the fame of their beauty having reached Blue Beard, he determined to ask one of them in marriage. Having ordered a carriage, he called at their house, where he saw the two young ladies, and was very politely received by their mother, with whom he begged a few moments conversation.

After the two young ladies left the room, he began by describing his immense riches, and then told her the purport of his visit, begging she would use her interest in his favour. They were both so lovely, he said, that he would be happy to get either of them for his wife, and would therefore leave it to their own choice to determine upon the subject, and immediately took his leave.

When the proposals of Blue Beard were mentioned to the young ladies by their mother, both Miss Anne and her sister Fatima protested, that they would never marry an ugly man, and particularly one with such a frightful blue beard; because, although he possessed immense riches, it was reported in the country, that he had married several beautiful ladies, and nobody could tell what had become of them.

Their mother said, that the gentleman was agreeable in his conversation and manners; that the ugliness of his face, and the blue beard, were defects which they would soon be reconciled to from habit: that his immense riches would procure them every luxury their heart could desire; and he was so civil, that she was certain the scandalous reports about his wives must be entirely without foundation.

The two young ladies were as civil as they possibly could be, in order to conceal the disgust they felt at Blue Beard, and, to soften their refusal, replied to this effect,—That, at present, they had no desire to change their situation; but if they had, the one sister could never

think of depriving the other of so good a match, and that they did not wish to be separated.

Blue Beard having called next day, the old lady told him what her daughters had said; on which he sighed deeply, and pretended to be very much disappointed; but as he had the mother on his side, he still continued his visits to the family. Blue Beard, knowing the attractions that fine houses, fine furni-

ture, and fine entertainments, have on the minds of ladies in general, invited the mother, her two daughters, and two or three other ladies who were then on a visit to them, to spend a day or two with him at his castle.

Blue Beard's invitation was accepted, and having spent a considerable time in arranging their wardrobe, and in adorning their persons, they all set out for the splendid mansion of Blue Beard.

On coming near the castle, although they had heard a great deal of the taste and expense that had been employed in decorating it, they were struck with the beauty of the trees that overshadowed the walks through which they passed, and with the fragrancy of the flowers which perfumed the air. When they reached the castle, Blue Beard, attended by a number of his servants in splendid dresses, received them with the most polite courtesy, and conducted them to a magnificent drawing-room.

An elegant repast was ready in the dining-room, to which they adjourned. Here they were again astonished by the grandeur of the apartment and the elegance of the entertainment, and they

felt so happy, that the evening passed away before they were aware.

Next day, after they had finished breakfast, the ladies proceeded to examine the pictures and furniture of the

rooms that were open, and were truly astonished at the magnificence that every where met their view.

The time rolled pleasantly away amidst a succession of the most agreea

ble amusements, consisting of hunting, music, dancing, and banquets, where the richest wines, and most tempting delicacies, in most luxurious profusion, presented themsevles in every direction.

The party felt so agreeable amidst these scenes of festivity, that they continued at the castle several days, during which the cunning Blue Beard, by every obsequious service, tried to gain the favour of his fair guests. Personal attentions, even although paid us by an ugly creature, seldom fail to make a favourable impression; it was therefore no wonder that Fatima, the youngest of the two sisters, began to think Blue Beard a very polite, pleasant, and civil gentleman; and that the beard, which she and her sister had been so much afraid of, was not so very blue.

A short time after her return home, Fatima, who was delighted with the attention which had been paid her at the castle, told her mother that she did not now feel any objections to accept of Blue Beard as a husband. The old lady immediately communicated to him the change in her daughter's sentiments.

Blue Beard, who lost no time in paying the family a visit, was in a few days privately married to the young lady

and soon afte the ceremony, Fatima, accompanied by her sister, returned to the castle the wife of Blue Beard.

On arriving there, they were received at the entrance by all his retinue, attired in splendid dresses, and Blue Beard, after saluting his bride, led the way to an elegant entertainment, where, every

thing that could add to to their comfort being prepared, they spent the evening in the most agreeable manner.

The next day, and every succeeding day, Blue Beard always varied the amusements, and a month had passed away imperceptibly, when he told his wife that he was obliged to leave her for a few weeks, as he had some affairs to transact in a distant part of the country, which required his personal attendance.

"But," said he, "my dear Fatima, you may enjoy yourself in my absence in any way that will add to your happiness, and you can invite your friends to make the time pass more agreeably, for you are sole mistress in this castle. Here are the keys of the two large wardrobes; this is the key of the great box that contains the best plate, which we use for company; this of my strong box, where I keep my money; and this belongs to the casket, in which are all my jewels. Here also is a master-key to all the rooms in the house; but this small key belongs to the blue closet at the end of the long gallery on the ground floor. I give you leave," he continued,

" to open, or do what you like with all the rest of the castle except this closet: now, my dear, remember you must not enter it, nor even put the key into the lock. If you do not obey me in this, expect the most dreadful of punishments."

She promised him implicit obedience to his orders, and then accompanied him to the gate, where Blue Beard, after sa

luting her in a tender manner, stepped into the coach, and drove away.

When Blue Beard was gone, Fatima sent a kind invitation to her friends to come immediately to the castle, and ordered a grand entertainment to be prepared for their reception. She also sent a messenger to her two brothers, both officers in the army, who were quartered about forty miles distant, requesting they would obtain leave of absence, and spend a few days with her. So eager were her friends to see the apartments and the riches of Blue Beard's castle, of which they had heard so much, that in less than two hours after receiving notice, the whole company were assembled, with the exception of her brothers, who were not expected till the following day.

As her guests had arrived long before the time appointed them for the entertainment. Fatima took them thro' every apartment in the castle, and displayed all the wealth she had acquired by her marriage with Blue Beard. They went from room to room, and from wardrobe to wardrobe, expressing fresh wonder and delight at every new object

they came to; but their surprise was increased when they entered the drawing-rooms, and saw the grandeur of the furniture.

During the day, Fatima was so much engaged, that she never once thought of the blue closet, which Blue Beard had ordered her not to open; but when all the visitors were gone, she felt a great curiosity to know its contents. She took out the key, which was made of the finest gold, and went to consult with her sister on the subject. Anne used every argument she could think of to dissuade Fatima from her purpose, and reminded her of the threats of Blue Beard; but all in vain, for Fatima was now bent on gratifying her curiosity.

She therefore, in spite of all her sister could do, seized one of the candles, and hurried down stairs to the fatal closet. On reaching the door she stopped, and began to reason with herself on the propriety of her conduct; but her curiosity at length overcame every other consideration, and, with a trembling hand, she applied the key to the lock, and opened the door. She had only advanced a few steps, when the most frightful scene

met her view, and, struck with horror and dismay, she dropped the key of the closet. She was in the midst of blood,

and the heads, bodies, and mutilated limbs of murdered ladies lay scattered on the floor. These ladies had all been married to Blue Beard, and had suffered for their imprudent curiosity, the key, which was the gift of a fairy, always betraying their fatal disobedience.

The terror of Fatima was not diminished on observing these dreadful words on the wall—" *The Reward of Disobedience and Imprudent Curiosity !*" She trembled violently; but, on recovering a little, she snatched up the key, and having again locked the door, left this abode of horror.

As soon as she reached her sister's chamber, she related the whole of her horrid adventure. They then examined the key, but it was all covered with blood, and they both turned pale with fear. They spent a good part of the night in trying to clean off the blood from the key, but it was without effect, for though they washed and scoured it with brick dust and sand, no sooner was the blood removed from one side, than it appeared on the other. Fatigued with their exertions, they at last retired to bed, where they passed a sleepless and anxious night.

Fatima rose at a late hour next day, and consulted with her sister how she ought to proceed. She thought first of escaping from the castle, but as her brothers were expected in an hour or two, she resolved to wait their arrival.

A loud knock at the gate made her almost leap for joy, and she cried, "they are come! they are come!" but what was her consternation when Blue Beard hastily opened the door, and entered. It was impossible for Fatima to conceal her agitation, although she pretended to be very happy at his sudden and unexpected return.

Blue Beard, who guessed what she had been about, requested the keys, in order, as he said, that he might change his dress. She went to her chamber, and soon returned with the keys, all except the one belonging to the blue closet. He took the keys from her with seeming indifference, and after glancing at them minutely, said, rather sternly, "How is this, Fatima! I do not see the key of the blue closet here! Go and bring it to me instantly."

The poor girl, feeling the crisis of her fate approaching, said, "I will go and search for it," and left the apartment in tears. She went straight to her sister's chamber, where they again tried, but in vain, to remove the blood from the key. The voice of Blue Beard again calling

for her, she was forced to return, and reluctantly to give him the fatal key.

On examining the key, Blue Beard burst into a terrible rage. "Pray Madam," said he, "how came this blood to be here?" "I am sure I do not know," replied she, trembling, and turning pale.

"What! do you not know!" cried Blue Beard, in a voice like thunder, which made poor Fatima start with fear; "but I know well! You have been

in the forbidden blue closet! And since you are so fond of prying into secrets, you shall take up your abode with the ladies you saw there."

Almost expiring with fear and terror, the trembling Fatima sunk upon her

knees, and implored him in the most piteous manner to forgive her. But the cruel Blue Beard, deaf to her intreaties,

drew his dreadful scymetar, and bid her prepare for immediate death.

Blue Beard had raised his arm to give the fatal blow, when a dreadful shriek from her sister, who at that moment entered the apartment, arrested his attention. She entreated him to spare the life of Fatima, but he was deaf to her intercession, and would only grant her one quarter of an hour, that she might make her peace with Heaven, before he put her to death.

Blue Beard then dragged her up to a large hall in the top of the tower of the castle, to prevent her groans being heard, to which they were followed by her sister. He then told her to make the best use of the time, as she might expect his return the moment it elapsed, and immediately left the place.

When alone with her sister, Fatima felt her dreadful situation, and again burst into tears. Only fifteen minutes between her and the most cruel death, without the least chance of escape; for Blue Beard had secured the door when he retired, and the staircase they saw only led to the battlements. Fatima's thoughts were now turned to her broth-

ers, whom she expected that day; and she requested her sister to ascend to the top of the tower, to see if there was any appearance of them.

Fatima's sister immediately ascended to the top of the battlements, while the poor trembling girl below, every minute, cried out, "Sister Anne, my dear sister Anne, do you see any one coming yet?"

Her sister always replied, "There is not a human being in view, and I see nothing but the sun and the grass."

She was upon her knees bewailing her fate, when Blue Beard, in a tremendous voice, cried out, "Are you ready? the time is expired;" and she heard the sound of his footsteps approaching. She again supplicated him to allow her five minutes longer to finish her prayers, which he, knowing she was completely within his power, granted her, and again left her.

Fatima again renewed her inquiries to her sister;" "Do you see any one coming yet?"

Her sister replied, "There is not a human being within sight."

When the five minutes were elapsed,

the voice of Blue Beard was heard bawling out, "Are you ready yet?"

She again beseeched him to allow her only two minutes more, and then addressed her sister, "Dear Anne, do you see any one coming yet?"

"I see," said her sister, "a cloud of dust rising a little to the left."

In breathless agitation, she cried, "Do you think it is my brothers?"

"Alas! no, my dearest Fatima," returned her sister, "it is only a flock of sheep."

Again the voice of Blue Beard was heard, and she begged for one minute longer. She then called out for the last time, "Sister Anne, do you see no one coming yet?"

Her sister quickly answered, "I see two men on horseback, but they are still a great way off."

"Thank heaven," exclaimed Fatima, "I shall yet be saved, for it must be my two brothers! My dearest sister, make every signal in your power to hasten them forward, or they will be too late."

Blue Beard's patience being now exhausted, he burst open the door in a rage, and made a blow at the wretched Fatima, with the intention of striking off her head; but she sprang close to him and evaded it. Furious at being foiled in his aim, he threw her from him, and then seizing her by the hair of the head, was in the act of striking her a blow with his scymetar, when the noise of persons approaching, with hasty steps, arrested the progress of his sanguinary arm. Blue Beard had not time

to conjecture who the intruders might be, when the door opened, and two officers, with their swords drawn, rushed into the apartment.

Struck with terror, the guilty wretch released his wife from his grasp, and without attempting to resist, he tried to effect his escape from the resentment of her brothers: but they pursued and seized him before he had got above

twenty paces from the place. After reproaching Blue Beard with his cruelty, they dragged him back to the spot where he intended to have murdered their sister; and there, stabbing him to the heart with their swords, he expired, uttering the most horrid oaths and execrations.

Fatima, who had fallen to the ground at the time Blue Beard quitted his hold of her, still lay in the same situation insensible; for the appearance of her brothers, at the moment she expected certain death, had thrown her into a faint, which continued during the whole of the time they were engaged in despatching her husband.

The two young officers now turned their attention to their sister, whom they raised from the ground; but she could hardly be persuaded of her safety, till they pointed to where Blue Beard lay extended and lifeless.

Fatima, on recovering a little, tenderly embraced her deliverers; and the appearance of their sister Anne, who had come down from the top of the battlements, added to their happiness.

As all those horrid murders which had been committed by Blue Beard, were unknown to his domestics, on whose credulity he imposed by falsehoods, which they had no means of detecting, Fatima and her brothers thought the most prudent way to act, was to assemble them together, and then disclose the wickedness of their late master.

By the direction of Fatima, her two brothers conducted all the servants to the dreadful scene of her husband's cruelties, and then showing them his dead body, related the whole occurrences which had taken place. They all said that his punishment was not adequate to what he deserved, and begged that they might be continued in the service of their mistress.

As Blue Beard had no relations, Fatima was sole heir to the whole of his immense property, and mistress of the castle, in the possession of which she was confirmed by the laws of the country. She then sent notice to all the families in the neighbourhood of the death of her husband, and the horrid proofs of his cruelty were laid open for two days to all who chose to inspect them. He was then buried privately, along with all the bodies of the ladies he had murdered, and the fatal closet underwent a complete repair, which removed every trace of his barbarity.

Soon after this, Fatima gave a magnificent entertainment to all her friends, where happiness was seen in every face; and on this occasion the poor, who were

assembled for many miles round, partook most liberally of her bounty.

Though possessed of riches almost inexhaustible, Fatima disposed of them with so much discretion, that she gained the esteem of every one who knew her. She bestowed handsome fortunes on her two brothers; and to her sister, who was married about two months after, she gave a very large dowry.

The beauty, riches, and amiable conduct of Fatima, attracted a number of admirers, and among others, a young nobleman of very high rank, who, to a handsome person, added every quality calculated to make a good husband; and after a reasonable time spent in courtship, their marriage was celebrated with great rejoicings.

FINIS